

THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

February 23, 1988

Drs. Richard D. Kolodner & Francis L. Macrina
Editors-in-Chief
PLASMID

Dear Drs. Kolodner & Macrina:

As you well know, the term "plasmid" was coined in 1952 in my article in *Physiological Reviews* 32:403- 430.

During the last few years, I have been writing a number of retrospective memoirs, covering my research since 1945. Eventually these might be gathered into a coherent book; but that will be a long time off. To provide a focus for my writing, it has been helpful for me to have defined targets of opportunity, particular chunks of history.

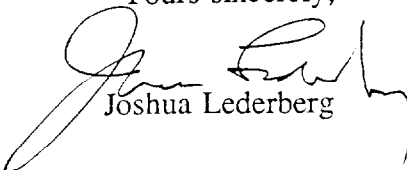
Would you be interested in such a contribution from me, on the concept of the plasmid? I had in mind about 6 to 10 full print pages, in a spirit akin to the enclosures. My own role in "plasmid" was however more the crystallization (and clarification) of ideas floating in a saturated solution, rather than decisive experimental contributions (*pace* lambda and F). So, while I would recall how these experiments related to the formulation of the concept, this piece would be far less personally autobiographical than several of the others I have written.

I am never sure how editors or readers take to being reminded of the personal and historical aspects of science; please don't hesitate to give a prompt and candid answer, either way, what you think of this proposal. The fitness of "PLASMID" for such writing needs no explanation. (Do you have your own preliminary announcements handy for what you had in mind in founding the journal?) There have been only occasional bits of plasmid-related philosophy; one recent book is:

Jan Sapp *Beyond the Gene. Cytoplasmic inheritance and the struggle for authority in genetics.* Oxford. 1987 266pp.

I find it overly sociological, even oblivious to actual evidence; but it has an interesting picture of Tracy Sonneborn and some other cytoplasm- oriented geneticists. I suspect reading it ultimately motivated my writing to you now.

Yours sincerely,


Joshua Lederberg